

HOLCOMBE MOOR, SPENLEACH AREA, BURY

An Archaeological Assessment

The Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit was commissioned by Holcombe Moor Training Centre to carry out an assessment of the archaeological implications of the 5 Year Management Plan for the Spenleach Area of Holcombe Moor, Bury. The object was to identify sites of significance and, where necessary, make recommendations.

1.2 A survey was undertaken and this report presents a summary of the findings.

1.3 The survey consisted of the examination of published and unpublished map series, aerial photographs, documentary material from a variety of published and manuscript sources, and field survey of the area, in order to relate the research findings to the existing landscape.

2. The Setting

2.1 GEOLOGY

Solid

The underlying solid geology of the study area is of the Upper Carboniferous Millstone Grit Series which includes the Holcombe Brook coal seam. Along the side of Holcombe Brook valley outcropping shale from this series can be seen.

Drift

The majority of the area is overlain by a thick layer of boulder clay with only a small area of sand and gravel to the east of Spendleach Lane.

2.2 TOPOGRAPHY

The landscape of the study area slopes from 220m near Simons Farm in the north to 175m where Bolton Road crosses a small brook in the south. The eastern border of the area is marked by the steep sided valley through which Holcombe Brook flows. A smaller brook flows through the southern part of the study area and is itself fed by a number of small rivulets.

3. Historical Background

3.1 PREHISTORY

There is no evidence for prehistoric activity within the study area. However a number of finds including a mesolithic flint scatter (Greater Manchester Sites and Monuments Record No 338) from Bull Hill, two Early Bronze Age stone hammers (SMR Nos 343 & 3817), a flint knife (SMR No 349) and a third stone hammer of uncertain date (SMR No 3801) have been recovered from the vicinity. The poorly drained soils within the study area would not tend to favour settlement by early man. The majority of the finds mentioned have been recovered from the Irwell valley to the east where the better drained soils, together with the good communications offered by this major river system, would provide prehistoric man with far more favourable conditions for settlement.

3.2 ROMAN

There is no evidence of Roman activity within the study area. The Roman road between Manchester and Ribchester lies approximately 2km to the west.

3.3 ANGLO-SAXON

No sites or finds of this period have been recovered from the study area. However the placename Tottington is generally accepted as a possible '-ingatun' name and hence as evidence for early settlement (Mills 1976, 141). The first element 'Totta' is one of the commonest Old English personal names, evidenced from an early date, and the village is situated near the Roman road.

3.4 MEDIEVAL

The study area lies within the township of Tottington Lower End which was formerly part of the larger manor of Tottington. In the early 13th century the manor was held by the Montbegon family. In 1235 the lordship was sold to John de Lacy. In 1313 Tottington was described as one of the free chases of Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, the heir to the Lacy estates.

In the early 13th century Roger de Montbegon gave 'Holecomb' to the monks of Monk Bretton, near Barnsley (Dugdale 1846, 133; Farrer & Brownbill 1911, 145 n13); in 1534 the farm, land and tenements in 'Hollekham' held by the abbey were valued at 13s 4d per annum (Dugdale 1846, 139). After the Dissolution the monks' lands were granted to John Braddyll of Whalley (Farrer & Brownbill 1911, 145).

3.5 POST-MEDIEVAL

Coupe in her article on the industrial development of Tottington suggests that prior to 1500 there can only have been small-scale settlement in this upland area and that only as a result of deforestation combined with the growth of the wool industry did settlement in larger numbers begin to take place. During the 16th century, Coupe argues

farmers supplemented their income with the returns made from domestic woollen production and 'increasingly, farmers employed weavers and spinners, rather than labourers, and housed them in "folds" of small cottages around the farm houses' (Coupe 1977, 96).

The earliest reference consulted which records any properties within the study area is a list of 'the names of the lands and tenements in 1658' (Dowsett 1902, 52-4) amongst which are 'Henry Bridge of Spendleach' and 'Thomas Jackson of Symond's Hill' (Dowsett suggests that this is Simons Farm). A number of other properties in close proximity to the study area are also mentioned these include 'Thomas Ainsworth of Ridge', 'John Ainsworth of Hoyles' and 'Henry Holt of Hollingreave'. The 1658 list would suggest that many of the farms in and around the study area were in existence by this early date. Indeed 'Hollingreave' is mentioned amongst the holdings of Christophehr Holt in 1517 (Farrer & Brownbill 1911, 147 n 29).

An assessment of the township dated March 1793 records Francis Orrel as occupier of Simons and 'Brook & Haslam' at Spendleach (LRO, DDX/118/154/2). The Poor Rate Assessment of 1809 lists Oliver Dearden and John Smith as occupiers at Simons and James Livesey at 'Spend Leach' (Bury Central Library, D 43.4 Tott).

The earliest map evidence for the area is William Yates's Map of Lancashire dated 1786. Both Higher and Lower Spendleach appear to be shown on Spendleach Lane as is Simons and the lane which leads to it. Unfortunately Yates's map does not show the plan of individual buildings and it is not until the tithe map of 1842 that this information is supplied. One of the buildings at Simons is described as 'House, barn, cowhouse and garden' and is shown as a single rectangular structure. This building still stands and is a laithe-house (Site 1; see section 4, *Gazetteer of Sites*). One of the buildings at Lower Spendleach, now demolished (8), is similarly described on the 1842 map as 'House, barn, garden and fold', which also suggests a long-house/laithe-house plan for this property. Higher Spendleach (7) is shown as a single elongated structure on the tithe map and may also be of this building tradition, although no reference to farm buildings is made in the tithe assessment. Both Dandy Hall and Gibraltar which first appear on the 1842 map are described as 'House, barn and cowhouse'; however in both cases two buildings are shown, of which the smaller may be a detached farmhouse.

At first inspection the long-house and the laithe-house can be difficult to distinguish since essentially they can be given a single description namely 'a rural dwelling in which the house, the byre (cow-house), and sometimes the barn, were built in the same range and not as separate buildings' (Smith 1963, 415). The distinction between the two types of building becomes more apparent upon entering the building and studying the relationship between the house, the shippin (the Lancashire term for a cow-house) and/or the barn. The long-house consists of a housepart and cow-house linked by a cross-passage which provides a common access to both parts. As a type of farm the long-house can be regarded as the standard medieval farm and continued to be built in parts of England until well into the 18th century. The laithe-house does not have a cross-passage and intercommunication between the two parts of the farm is less common. The term 'laithe' is a Halifax expression for the combination of barn and shippin. According to Brunskill the true laithe house was built all at one time but, 'as with the longhouse, the form may be achieved by adding later farm buildings to an existing farmhouse' (Brunskill 1987, 109). The distribution of laithe-houses is restricted almost entirely to the Pennine slopes, whereas long-houses can be found from as far

apart as Cumbria and Devon. The date range for the occurrence of laithe-houses is also more restricted than that of the long-house; examples survive from as early as 1650 and as late as 1880, but the great period of construction was between 1780 and 1820 (*ibid*, 110).

Brunskill notes that as a building type the laithe-house 'seems to have grown out of a society which enjoyed the profitable combination of hand-powered textile work and part-time farming' (*ibid*). This reference to textile works ties in with events taking place within Tottington and would tend to indicate that the now demolished, elongated structures shown on the tithe map were in fact laithe-houses rather than long-houses.

As well as the farming aspect of the buildings within the study area, the industrial activity taking place within these buildings should be considered. There is no direct reference to spinning or weaving taking place in any of the properties within the study area. However, as Coupe points out when summarizing a 1794 survey of the township, 'All available existing buildings, from the Hall to the meanest shed were adapted to the industry, 'for 'loomshops' and warehouses, and rows of cottages were built by the manufacturers to house extra looms and workers' (Coupe 1977, 100). Coupe goes on to say that while farming persisted throughout the industrial period it was 'usually mixed with other trades: always weaving' (*ibid*, 103). The 1842 tithe award records two groups of 'cottages' at Simons Farm, while there is no firm evidence to suggest that these housed weavers rather than farm labourers the nearby factories at Cinder Hill and Ridge together with the widespread involvement in domestic handloom weaving are sufficient factors to suggest the possibility that they were weavers' cottages.

The field pattern within the study area appears to date to the 17th century or possibly slightly earlier (cf Taylor 1987, 118-38). The enclosure of these fields would have coincided with the inhabitation of the area and therefore while the field boundaries are now beginning to disappear the landscape still retains much of its 17th-century appearance. Many of the fields were described as meadow in the 1842 tithe award and the land would probably have served the farmers as a site for late winter and early spring grazing, as the watery conditions would have stimulated early growth for pasture.

4. Gazetteer of Sites

- 1) SD 7682 1600
Simons Farm M FW

✓ Appears on 1786 map. Two groups of structures are shown on the 1842 tithe map: firstly, three buildings to the north (an L-shaped structure, a T-shaped structure and rectangular building), described as 'Farmhouse, barn, cowhouse and garden, cottages and cottages'; secondly, a structure to the south described as a 'Farmhouse, barn, cowhouse and garden'. This second building is still standing. It is a 2 storey laithe-house, stone built with a modern slate roof and a single ridge chimney. The eastern elevation of the house has a 3-light and 4-light recessed stone mullion window to both floors, and a stone porch. The barn has a square headed door in the eastern elevation. A later outshut runs $\frac{3}{4}$ of the length of the west elevation and appears to have modern windows. Of the buildings to the north only a single stone built structure survives.

- 2) SD 7681 1586
Pond M FW

✗ This pond appears on the 1850 map and may be a water-filled marl pit.

- 3) SD 7697 1579
Depression FW

✗ A grassed over depression in the corner of the field may be the result of clay extraction.

- 4) SD 7687 1582 (Linear)
Lane M FW

✓ Appears on the 1786 map. A sunken lane in part about 4m wide.

- 5) SD 7687 1573
Pond M FW

✗ This pond appears on the 1850 map and may be a water-filled marl pit.

- 6) SD 7696 1570
Depression FW

✗ A large grassed over depression which may be the result of clay extraction.

- 7) SD 7655 1544
Higher Spendleach M FW

✓ Appears on 1786. A rectangular structure with

what appears to be a porch on the south side is shown on the 1842 tithe map. The property is described as 'Farmhouse yard and waste'. The site is vacant on the 1894 map. There are no visible remains of the building, apart from stone debris which may be related to a building on this site.

- 8) SD 7660 1535
Spenceleach (formerly Lower Spendleach) M FW

✓ Appears on the 1786 map. An L-shaped structure and two rectangular structures on the opposite side of the lane are shown on the 1842 tithe map. Only the northern rectangular building seems to be described in the apportionment, as a 'House, barn, garden and fold'. Three different structures are shown on the 1894 map; these include an L-shaped structure (of a different orientation to the previous structure), a small square structure to its south and a rectangular structure on the opposite side of the lane. The site is now vacant. The foundations of some of the structures are still visible. Much of the debris on the site is machine brick; however there are some stone remains.

- 9) SD 7675 1547
Gibraltar M FW

✓ Two rectangular structures are shown on the 1842 tithe map, one of which is far larger than the other. The property is described as 'Farmhouse, barn and cowhouse'. The site is now vacant. Some stone debris and what appears to be the house platform still remain.

- 10) SD 7692 1546
Dandy Hall M FW

✓ Two rectangular structures, one far larger than the other, are shown on the 1842 tithe map and described as 'House, barn and cowhouse'. On the 1964 map the site appears to have been converted into two dwellings. The present structure is T-shaped in plan, 2 storeys and stone built; it appears to have been extensively modernized.

- 11) SD 7664 1526 (Linear)
Spenceleach Lane M FW

2 Appears on the 1786 map.

- 12) SD 7663 1519
Depression FW

✗ A large overgrown depression, this may have been produced as a result of clay extraction.

5. Conclusion

5.1 There is no evidence for any activity within the study area before about 1500. The iron working site of Cinder Hill further up the valley is said to date to the Tudor period. The list of tenants dated 1658 provides evidence for many farmsteads in the vicinity including the site of Spendleach which is within the study area. Unfortunately it is unclear whether Higher or Lower Spendleach is the earlier property.

5.2 The description of the buildings in the tithe apportionment of 1842 together with the still standing farm house at Simons Farm (which borders the study area) suggests that laithe-houses were the standard type of building adopted in this area and that at least one of the Spendleach farmsteads may have had such a structure.

5.3 The surviving field system is of a 17th-century date or earlier and the landscape would appear to have supported a pastoral farming community. The widespread evidence for handloom weaving in the area would suggest that this industry supplemented the income from farming and some of the properties within the study area may well have contained looms for small scale woollen production.

5.4 The thick boulder clay which forms the drift geology of the area was often extracted for the production of bricks and a number of the depressions identified within the study area may well represent such activity (3, 6 & 12). The farmstead called Brick Kiln (SD 7672 1504), bordering the study area, as its name suggests, may have been the site of a kiln for brick manufacture.

6. Recommendations

6.1 The site of at least one of the Spenleach farmsteads (7 & 8) dates to the mid-17th century and may be earlier. If either of these sites is to be affected in any way an evaluation by trial evaluation is recommended to establish the level of surviving archaeology. Should early levels be confirmed this should be followed by a full-scale excavation if these levels are to be disturbed by the proposed works.

6.2 It is recommended that the existing field system should be maintained and where possible enhanced.

Sources

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Taylor C 1987 *Fields in the English Landscape*, Gloucester, Alan Sutton.

Maps

1786 Yates's Map of Lancashire.

1842 Plan of the Township of Tottington Lower End in the Parish of Bury in the County of Lancaster.

1850 (surveyed 1844-7) Ordnance Survey 6" to 1 mile First-Edition Lancashire Sheet 79.

1894 (resurveyed 1891)) Ordnance Survey 6" to 1 mile Lancashire Sheet 79.

1930 (revised 1927) Ordnance Survey 6" to 1 mile Lancashire sheet 79, S.E

1964 (revised 1962) Ordnance Survey 1:2500 sheets SD7615 & SD 7715, SD7616 & SD 7716.

1982 (revised 1980) Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 sheets SD 71 SE, SD 71 NE.

Aerial Photographs

Verticals held at the Greater Manchester Geological Unit, Peel House, Eccles:

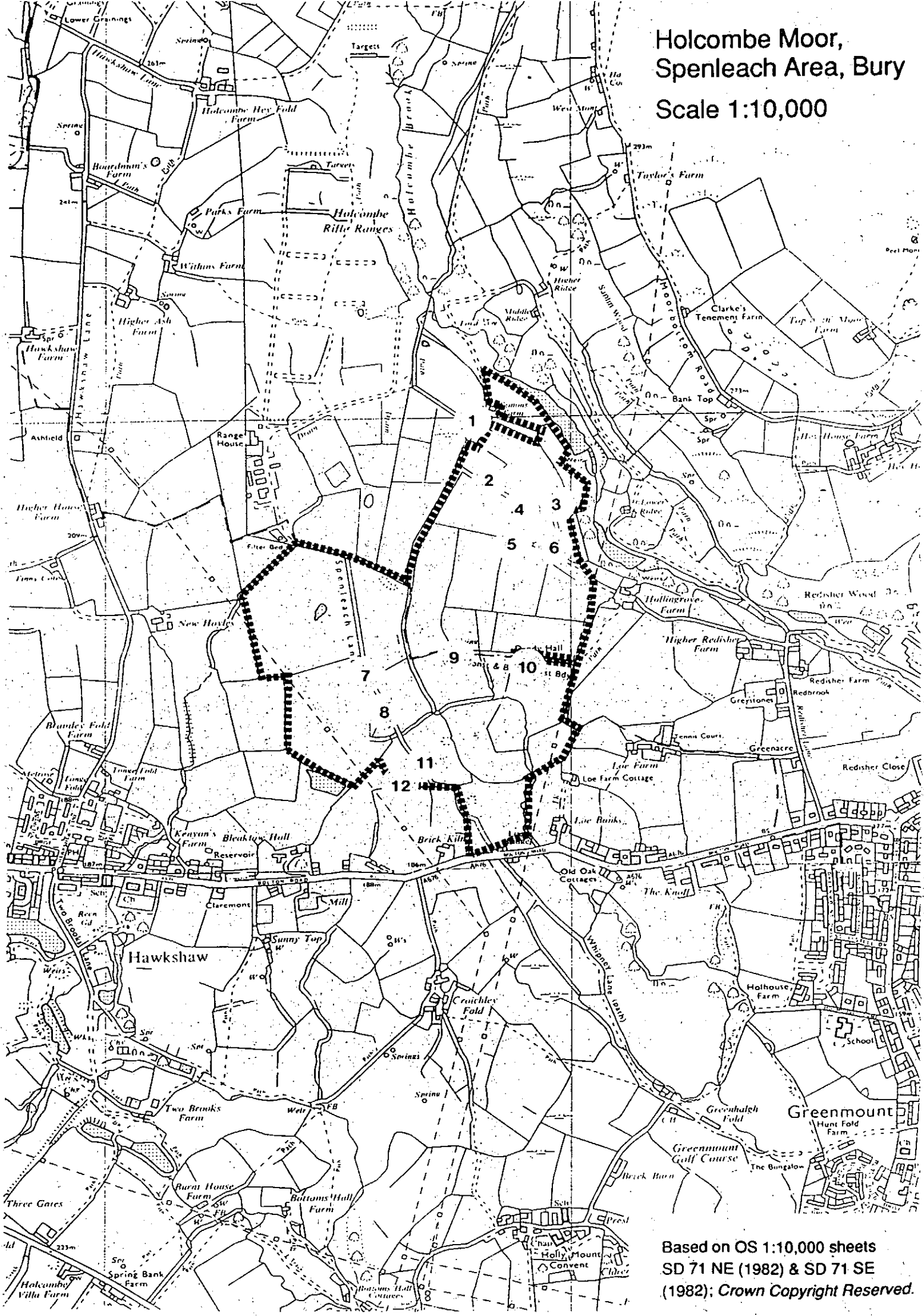
1977-9 Black and white verticals, scale 1:10,000.

1984 Black and white verticals, scale 1:10,000.

1989 Colour verticals, scale 1:10,000.

Holcombe Moor, Spenleach Area, Bury

Scale 1:10,000



Based on OS 1:10,000 sheets
SD 71 NE (1982) & SD 71 SE
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